

Nor does interest in the NAFTA preclude strong interest in Europe. Canada believes regional and multilateral trading arrangements are compatible and complementary. International trade is not a zero sum game played by regions or blocs.

What is more important than geography among trading partners is a shared commitment to fuller development of rules-based trade — a GATT-plus, if you will. Through accession, the NAFTA promises to be a non-discriminatory, comprehensive free trade regime fundamentally, in my view, open to all.

The second myth is that Canada is focused mainly on the Asia-Pacific region. Asia is important to all of us. It is an inescapable fact that Canadian business people share the global desire to succeed in Asia Pacific. The region's appetite for infrastructure projects meshes very well with Canadian capabilities ranging from hydro-electric turbines to fibre optics telecommunications to nuclear reactors.

However, developing new markets does not have to occur at the expense of current markets. Canada is committed to expanding its trade relations on all fronts — North America, Latin America, Asia-Pacific and certainly Europe.

For Canada, Europe remains a promising source of technology transfers and strategic alliances and a strong market for high value-added goods and services such as information technologies and aeronautical equipment. Last year, no less than three quarters of Canadian exports to Europe were fabricated materials and end products — exactly the kind of exports so vital to Canada's prosperity.

The third and final myth is that in creating the world's largest trading bloc, the European market is closed to Canadians and other outsiders.

In itself, the European Union does not present a barrier to trade. There are restrictions on agricultural and fisheries products, but European industrial tariffs are low and this sector is largely free of non-tariff barriers.

Some companies may think that if they were not in Europe before 1992, it is now, somehow, too late. That is, of course, not the case. Although there are still some impediments, I would assert that the major obstacle is psychological. Exporters must overcome their fear of Europe and take a second look at the opportunities.

As many business people in this room can attest, European markets are sophisticated, competitive, complex and unique — but they are accessible.